

I urge you to oppose the AT&T Comcast merger, which threatens the public interest principles that are essential to the Internet as an open and nondiscriminatory communications medium. The cable industry has long been characterized by anticompetitive local monopolies, restrictive control over content and services, high subscription rates and poor customer service. There is every reason to believe that these practices will be replicated in the combined company's control over high-speed Internet connections. AT&T Comcast will become a powerful media gatekeeper, leveraging its control over the network to exert undo influence over the evolution of broadband Internet content and services. The resulting lack of competition, innovation and diversity will harm both our economy and our democracy in the long run, with consumers left to bear the costs.

The lack of adequate broadband infrastructure is the biggest structural problem in the American economy. Phone and cable lines need to be open to competition to preserve free speech and the innovative environment that unleashed the prosperity of the 1990s. Better yet, why doesn't the federal government provide some real leadership on this issue and devise a strategy to deploy real broadband infrastructure. Les Valasz, President of Global Capital for Intel, defines this as a system capable of delivering 10mb connections to citizens' homes. The phone and cable companies will not do this without significant incentives. How about this...a program that provides tax incentives in return for REAL broadband infrastructure investment in return for open access? Just a thought.